Agricultural Marketing Service   SJ 359
Cotton Division
Grading Branch
Classing Office
Agricultural Commodity Grader (Cotton)
GS-1980-09
Permanent

INTRODUCTION

This position is located in a local classing office of the Cotton Division. This office is one of several classing offices located in a major cotton producing area through which are administered programs on cotton, cottonseed, cotton linters, and related commodities provided for in legislative and administrative requirements in connection with standards, marketing services, and allied regulatory responsibilities.

MAJOR DUTIES

The work involves examination and evaluation of cotton to determine its official U.S. class and acceptability in terms of quality and condition in accordance with official standards and related regulations. Also included is collection of market news on cotton, cottonseed and cotton linters, and inspection of licensed samplers at gins, warehouses, and oil mills.

Examines and evaluates cotton samples to determine appropriate classification. This includes both visual and tactile methods of inspection.

Provides certified assurance of the quality of cotton. Checks to see that assigned classifications have been recorded, processes cotton classification appeals, and assists with preparation of reports.

Collects cotton samples for use in surveys, studies, demonstrations, standards, and training programs.

Collects market information on prices, qualities, and movement of cotton and cottonseed.

Inspects and checks the work of licensed samplers and sampling at gins and warehouses in connection with Cotton Division programs.

Investigates complaints pertaining to classification or alleged violations.

Factor 1 - Knowledge Required by the Position   Level 1-6, 950 pts.

Thorough and detailed knowledge of cotton classification principles, methods, and standards, and skill in interpreting and applying cotton standards to class the full range of cotton samples handled by a classing office.

Knowledge of cotton harvesting and processing techniques to identify their effect on quality factors of cotton.

Skill in detecting and identifying defects in cotton samples and the causes of defects.

Knowledge of operation and benefits derived from the various Cotton Division programs.

Skill in conducting meetings to explain the operation and benefits derived from the various programs.

Factor 2 - Supervisory Controls   Level 2-3, 275 pts.

The office supervisor makes classing assignments and provides general coordination of the work.

The grader independently determines the classification of assigned cotton samples.

A higher graded supervisor spot checks the classification of a random sample (5-10 percent) of assigned cotton samples.

Field duties are normally performed under the general instructions of the Area Director.

Factor 3 - Guidelines   Level 3-3, 275 pts.

The primary guidelines consist of official cotton standards (physical and descriptive). Written and oral instructions and definitions as well as interpretation of official grade are also used.

The employee uses extensive judgment, particularly in making borderline grade determinations. These judgments must be made rapidly (2 per minute) and generally without referring to either the physical or written descriptive standards for specific guidance.

Field procedure manuals are available for guidance while in the field, but these are only guides and considerable judgment is required in solving problems as they arise.

<u>Factor 4 - Complexity</u>   Level 4-3, 150 pts.

The work consists of determining the classification of each sample of cotton. Grades are based on factors of color, leaf, and ginning preparation. There are 39 possible grades as well as several recognized reduction factors applicable to any of these grades.

These reduction factors vary from one location to another with harvesting practices and weather conditions. The classer must independently describe quality of every sample in all factors. The employee must look at both sides of each sample and make a final determination in accordance with regulations and instructions. All of this must be done rapidly and with a very high degree of accuracy.

Classification requires two of the five human senses: sight and touch. Memory, reasoning, and close concentration are required to a high degree.

The classer sees the color, preparation, and foreign matter and also feels the foreign matter in samples. Appearance of cotton standards must be remembered and the proper classification must be assigned to each sample.

Field work requires a wide acquaintance with individuals in the trade and a broad knowledge of their individual conditions and problems. In conducting meetings, the incumbent must be able to explain the operation and benefits derived from the various programs.

<u>Factor 5 - Scope and Effect</u>   Level 5-3, 150 pts.

The work involves making final classification determinations on individual samples of lint cotton.

The classification directly affects the price or value of the 480-pound bale represented by the sample. The monetary valuation of the commodity for which the certification memorandum is issued affects the financial interests of producers, handlers, and buyers.

Meetings at which the operation and benefits derived from the Cotton Division programs are explained can materially assist the producer in advantageously marketing his cotton, which is one of the major objectives of the Division.

<u>Factor 6 - Personal Contacts</u>   Level 6-1, 10 pts.

Contacts include other employees in the laboratory.

Field work requires continual and extensive contacts with various segments of the trade.

<u>Factor 7 - Purpose of Contacts</u>   Level 7-1, 10 pts.

The purpose is limited to the exchange of technical and administrative information related to the work. Coworkers are working toward a common objective - accurate cotton classification and instrument readings. Contacts with the trade are for the purpose of explaining the marketing services available under the Smith-Doxey Act and assisting the producer in advantageously marketing the cotton.

Factor 8 - Physical Demands   Level 8-2, 20 pts.

Classification of cotton is performed from a standing position.
Classification of cotton is extremely demanding on the hands, arms, and shoulders since it involves the handling of 1,600 portions of samples per day. Sample containers weighing 20 to 25 pounds are constantly moved by the employee. The classification process requires physical dexterity and mental alertness and is extremely tiring, both mentally and physically.

Field work necessitates visiting gins, warehouses, and oil mills and conducting meetings.

Factor 9 - Work Environment   Level 9-2, 20 pts.

The work environment exposes employee to crowded conditions. Moderate discomfort may be experienced due to the presence of cotton dust.

TOTAL POINTS - 1860